

SPOUSE SELECTION

In the previous chapter, we established the great significance of marriage. With that in mind, a Muslim is urged to seek a partner that would help him (or her) attain the desired fruits of marriage in a most fulfilling way. This makes the task of selecting a spouse most crucial.

1. RIGHTEOUSNESS

The first and foremost vital quality for a wife is righteousness. The Prophet (ﷺ) urged the men to seek a woman of faith and piety, and indicated that a man attains happiness through marrying her.

Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«تُنكَحُ الْمَرْأَةُ لِأَرْبَعٍ، لِمَالِهَا وَلِحَسَبِهَا وَلِحِمَالِهَا وَلِدِينِهَا،
فَأَظْفَرُ بِذَاتِ الدِّينِ، تَرَبَّتْ يَدَاكَ.»

“A woman is sought in marriage for four reasons: wealth, social status, beauty, and din (piety), So seek the one with din - may you then be successful^{1, 2}

Thawban (رضي الله عنه) reported that when Allah (ﷻ) revealed the warning in regard to those who treasure gold and silver³, the sahabah (رضي الله عنهم) wondered, "What kind of wealth should we then keep?" And 'Umar (رضي الله عنه) said, "I will find the answer to this." He rode his camel fast until he caught up with Allah's Messenger (ﷺ), and he (Thawban) was right behind him. He asked, “O Allah's Messenger! What kind of wealth should we keep?” He (ﷺ) replied:

¹ Literally, the Prophet (ﷺ) said, “*May your hands be filled with dust.*” This expression was common during the Prophet's (ﷺ) time, and it was not meant literally. It is an exclamation phrase reflecting encouragement or applause.

² Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others

³ At-Tawbah 9:34-35

«لِيَتَّخِذْ أَحَدُكُمْ قَلْبًا شَاكِرًا، وَلِسَانًا ذَاكِرًا،
وَزَوْجَةً مُؤْمِنَةً تُعِينُهُ عَلَى أَمْرِ الْآخِرَةِ.»

“Let each of you keep a heart grateful (to Allah), a tongue constantly extolling (Allah), and a believing wife who would assist him in regard to the affairs of the hereafter.”⁴

1. A THE WIFE BRINGS HAPPINESS OR MISERY

In this life, a righteous wife is a main source of happiness, whereas an evil wife is a major cause of misery. Sa'd Bin Abi Waqqas (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«أَرْبَعٌ مِنَ السَّعَادَةِ، وَأَرْبَعٌ مِنَ الشَّقَاءِ. فَمِنَ السَّعَادَةِ: الْمَرْأَةُ الصَّالِحَةُ، تَرَاهَا فَتُعْجِبُكَ، وَتَغِيبُ عَنْهَا فَتَأْمَنُهَا عَلَى نَفْسِهَا وَمَالِكَ؛ وَالدَّابَّةُ تَكُونُ وَطِيئَةً، فَتُلْحِقُكَ بِأَصْحَابِكَ؛ وَالدَّارُ تَكُونُ وَاسِعَةً كَثِيرَةً الْمُرَافِقُ؛ وَالْجَارُ الصَّالِحُ. وَمِنَ الشَّقَاءِ: الْمَرْأَةُ تَرَاهَا فَتَسُوؤُكَ، وَتَحْمِلُ لِسَانَهَا عَلَيْكَ، وَإِنْ غِيبَتْ عَنْهَا لَمْ تَأْمَنُهَا عَلَى نَفْسِهَا وَمَالِكَ؛ وَالدَّابَّةُ تَكُونُ قَطُوفًا، فَإِنْ ضَرَبَتْهَا أَتَعَبَتْكَ، وَإِنْ تَرَكْتَهَا لَمْ تُلْحِقْكَ بِأَصْحَابِكَ؛ وَالدَّارُ تَكُونُ ضَيِّقَةً قَلِيلَةً الْمُرَافِقُ؛ وَالْجَارُ السَّوُّ.»

“There are four sources of happiness and four sources of misery. Among the sources of happiness are:

⁴ Recorded by Ahmad, at-Tirmidhi, and others. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 2176)

1. **A good wife who pleases you when you look at her; and when you are away from her, you trust her in regard to herself and your property.**
2. **An easy ride that enables you to catch up with your companions.**
3. **A house that is spacious and of many facilities.**
4. **A good neighbor.**

And among the sources of misery are:

1. **An evil wife who dismays you when you look at her, who uses her tongue against you, and who, when you are away from her, you would not trust her in regard to herself or your property.**
2. **A stubborn ride that if you whip it would tire you, and if you leave it alone you would not be able to catch up with your companions.**
3. **A tight house of limited facilities.**
4. **An evil neighbor.”⁵**

2. GOOD CHARACTER

One should seek a wife who is known to be of good character or who has been raised in a good moral atmosphere. A woman of low moral standards should be avoided, even if she has other attractive qualities such as wealth or beauty.

Abu Musa al-Ash'ari' (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

⁵ Recorded by al-Hakim. Verified to be hasan by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 1047 & Sahih ul-Jami no. 3056). The fourth item in this hadith has been combined from another report recorded by Ibn Hibban, al-Khatib, and others, and verified to be authentic by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 282 & Sahih ul-Jami no. 887). A shorter form of this hadith is recorded by at-Tayalisi and verified to be hasan by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 1803 & Sahih ul-Jami no. 3629)

«ثلاثة يدعون الله عزّ وجلّ فلا يُستجاب لهم: رجلٌ كانت
تحتَه امرأةٌ سيئةُ الخلق فلم يطلّقها، ورجلٌ كان له على رجلٍ
مالٌ فلم يُشهِدْ عليه، ورجلٌ آتى سفيهاً ماله.»

“There are three individuals that, when they supplicate to Allah (ﷻ), their supplication is not answered: a man who has a wife of bad character but he does not divorce her, a man who lends money to another man without taking witnesses, and a man who gives money to a weak-minded person.”⁶

In this hadith, "bad character" pertains mostly to qualities such as looseness and promiscuity, making the woman's conduct dubious and her chastity questionable. A man who keeps such a wife is a dayyuth.

3. VIRGINITY

Virginity is not a condition for marriage, but is a recommended quality - provided that one has both options and that the women he is considering are equal in other respects. Virginity then becomes a weighing factor for a number of reasons that will be outlined in the subsequent sub-sections.

Jabir Bin 'Abdillah (رضي الله عنه) reported that when his father died⁷, he left behind nine girls that Jabir had to look after. Soon after that, Jabir married a non-virgin, and when the Prophet (ﷺ) met him he asked him, **“تزوجت يا جابر؟ Have you married, O Jabir?”** He replied, **"Yes."** He asked him, **بكر أم ثيبا؟ "Is she virgin or non-virgin?"** He replied, **"Non-virgin."** He (ﷺ) then said:

«فَهَلَا بَكَرًا ثُلَاغِبُهَا وَثُلَاغِبُكَ، وَثُلَاغِبُهَا وَثُلَاغِبُكَ؟»

⁶ Recorded by al-Hakim, Abu Nu'aym, and others. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (Sahih ul-Jami' no. 3075 & as-Sahihah no. 1805)

⁷ Jabir's father, 'Abdullah Bin 'Amr Bin Haram, was martyred in the battle of Uhud. Jabir was then nineteen years old

“Shouldn't you have considered a virgin who plays with you and you with her, and she laughs with you and you with her?”

Jabir replied, "Indeed, my father 'Abdullah died leaving many daughters. I did not want to add to them another young girl like themselves, so I married a grown woman to take care of them and look after them." Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) then said:

«فإِنَّكَ نِعَمَ مَا رَأَيْتَ، بَارَكَ اللَّهُ لَكَ خَيْرًا.»

“Indeed, you have made a good decision. May Allah bless that tremendously for you.”⁸

4. ABILITY TO BEAR CHILDREN

Since one of the important purposes of marriage is reproduction, it is recommended to marry a younger woman who would normally be more likely to bear many children. In turn, this is more likely to apply to virgins than non-virgins.

Ma'qil Bin Yasar (رضي الله عنه) reported that a man came to Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) and said, "I have encountered a woman of honor and beauty, but she cannot bear children. Should I marry her?" He said, “No!” After asking him two more times, Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«تَزَوَّجُوا الْوُدُودَ الْوُلُودَ، فَإِنِّي مُكَاثِّرُ بِكُمْ.»

“Marry a woman who is loving and can bear many children, because I will boast of your numbers (on Resurrection Day).”⁹

⁸ Recorded by al-Bukhari, Muslim, and others

⁹ Recorded by Abu Dawud and an-Nasai. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (Sahih ul-Jami' no. 2940 & Irwa' ul-Ghalil no. 1784)

5. LOVING ATTITUDE

One should seek to marry a woman who is expected to have a loving and caring attitude toward her husband. This is normally possible to sense from her environment and family's reputation. The above hadith of Ma'qil Bin Yasar (رضي الله عنه) alludes to this. Similarly, Abu Uthaynah as-Sadafi (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«خَيْرُ نِسَائِكُمُ الْوَلُودُ الْوَدُودُ، الْمُوَاسِيَةُ الْمُوَاتِيَةُ، إِذَا اتَّقَيْنَ اللَّهَ.
وَشَرُّ نِسَائِكُمُ الْمُتَبَرِّجَاتُ الْمُتَحَيَّلَاتُ، وَهُنَّ الْمُنَافِقَاتُ. لَا يَدْخُلُ
الْجَنَّةَ مِنْهُنَّ إِلَّا مِثْلُ الْغُرَابِ الْأَعْصَمِ.»

“The best of your women are those who are bearers of many children, loving (to their husbands), comforting, and tolerant - provided that they have taqwa of Allah. And the worst of your women are those who display their charms (to other than their husbands), and who walk with arrogance. Such are the hypocrites, and those of them who will enter Jannah are as rare as are the red-beaked and red-legged crows.”¹⁰

6. CONTENTMENT

An important quality to be sought in a wife is contentment. A dissatisfied wife would make her husband miserable and push him to do anything to please her.

It is easier for a virgin than a non-virgin to be content with her husband's financial situation and with what he gives her. Jabir Bin 'Abdillah (رضي الله عنه) reported that Allah's Messenger (ﷺ) said:

¹⁰ Recorded by al-Bayhaqi (in as-Sunan) and others. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (Sahih ul-Jami' no. 3330 & as-Sahihah no. 1849). The last part of it (about the crow) is also recorded by Ahmad and others from 'Amr Bin al-'As (رضي الله عنه) and verified to be authentic by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 1850)

«عليكم بالأبكار، فإنهنَّ أنتنَّ أرحاماً، وأعذب أفواهاً،
وأقلَّ خبأً، وأرضى باليسير.»

“Seek (in marriage) virgins, because they have more fertile wombs, sweeter speech, less slyness, and are easily satisfied with little (wealth).”¹¹

7. NAIVETY

Naivety, simplicity, and innocence of heart are commendable qualities to be sought in a wife, and are more present in virgins than non-virgins - because of their lesser experience in the ways of life. This is demonstrated in the above hadith of Jabir (رضي الله عنه).

8. BEAUTY

Beauty, wealth, and prestige are all mentioned the earlier hadith of Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) as being secondary qualities that should not be sought at the cost of righteousness.

However, we cannot totally disregard these qualities - especially beauty. Abu Hurayrah (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Messenger (ﷺ) said:

«خير النساء التي تسره إذا نظر، وتطيعه إذا أمر،
ولا تخالقه في نفسها ولا مالها بما يكره.»

“The best of women is that who pleases him (i.e., her husband) when he looks at her, obeys him when he orders, and does not subject her person or money to what he dislikes.”¹²

¹¹ Recorded by at-Tabarani (in al-Awsat) and ad-Diya' ul-Maqdisi. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (as-Sahihah no. 624 and Sahih ul-Jami' no. 4053)

¹² Recorded by Ahmad, an-Nasai, and al-Hakim. Verified to be authentic by al-Albani (Sahih ul-Jami' no. 3298 & as-Sahihah no. 1838)

A woman's appearance being "pleasing" to her husband applies first to pleasing him when he observes her righteousness and obedience to Allah (ﷻ). But it may also apply to pleasing him with her physical beauty. That is why it has been ordained to look at a woman when courting her, as we will discuss in the next chapter.

9. COMPATIBILITY

A man should seek a wife who is compatible with him, and a woman should seek a husband compatible with her.

Qualities Sought in a Good Husband

DEEN AND GOOD CHARACTER

The Prophet (ﷺ) instructed the guardians of women to marry them to men of good din and character. When a man of known righteousness and good character seeks to marry a woman, he should be seriously considered.

Abu Hurayrah, Ibn 'Umar, and Abu Hatim al-Muzani (رضي الله عنه) reported that the Prophet (ﷺ) said:

«إذا أتاكم من ترضون دينه وخلقه فزوجوه،
إن لا تفعلوا تكن فتنة في الأرض وفساد عريض.»

“If a man comes to you seeking marriage, and you are satisfied with his din and character, marry him - lest a fitnah (harm) and great destruction become rampant on the earth.”¹³

IS WEALTH IMPORTANT?

Unfortunately, when looking for a husband, the woman's family or wali first look at his bank account, instead of his iman, taqwa, and 'aqidah (creed).

¹³ Recorded by at-Tirmidhi, Ibn Majah, and others. Verified to be hasan by al-Albani (Sahih ul-Jami no. 270 & as-Sahihah no. 1022)

Furthermore, many of today's Muslim women have been affected by un-Islamic ideologies. They do not seek a husband who has taqwa and good character, which would guarantee for them a lasting, loving relationship. Rather, they seek a husband who is affluent, has an prominent position, or holds a higher degree of education - all at the cost of religion, morals, and, eventually, happiness.

While we do not call on Muslims to live in poverty, we emphasize that wealth is a minor factor that should never be compared to deen and manners.

NO COMPARISON

When a woman marries a man with deen and good character, she will not lose out in any respect: if he keeps her, he will do so in a good manner; and if he releases her, he will do so in a good manner. Furthermore, a man with deen and good character will be a blessing for her and her children, and they will all help each other learn and improve in their Deen.

A woman should avoid a man who does not have these attributes - especially if he is negligent of the prayers, drinks alcohol, commits zina, or commits any of the other major sins. Wealth and social status should never be her main criteria in deciding for or against a husband.